

ANN
CORIO
THIS
WAS
BURLESQUE



A Pictorial History of Burlesque

THIS WAS BURLESQUE OPENED IN NEW YORK ON MARCH 2, 1962. AFTER A THREE AND A HALF YEAR RUN, IT WENT ON TOUR AND BROKE RECORDS FOR FIVE YEARS EVERYWHERE IT PLAYED. ON FEB. 11, 1970, MISS CORIO BROUGHT HER SHOW BACK TO BROADWAY FOR A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT OF TWELVE WEEKS BECAUSE (TO QUOTE MISS CORIO ON HER OPENING SPEECH) "WE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME YOU HAD A CLEAN SHOW IN NEW YORK." IT RECEIVED RAVE REVIEWS. HERE ARE SOME QUOTES.

N. Y. TIMES

"ANN CORIO IS A MONUMENT TO BURLESQUE, SHE MAY LIVE FOREVER. SINCE HER LAST VISIT TO NEW YORK THE AMERICAN THEATRE HAS SHUCKED ITS CLOTHES AND BROADENED ITS LANGUAGE BUT MISS CORIO HAS NOT CHANGED HER POSE. THIS WAS BURLESQUE WAS ALWAYS A SENTIMENTAL EXCURSION WITH ITS OWN BRAND OF INNOCENSE AND NAIVETE. IT STILL IS."

N. Y. DAILY NEWS

"ANN CORIO IS BACK WITH HER NEW EDITION OF THIS WAS BURLESQUE. IT SPARKLES—THE HUMOR IS RIDICULOUSLY FUNNY—NOT THE SICKLY BLUE MATERIAL SO PREVALENT TODAY IN OUR OFF BROADWAY THEATRE. T.W.B. IS VERY ENTERTAINING."

GREATER NEW YORK RADIO

"THE CLEANEST SHOW IN TOWN. NO OBSCENITIES, NO MESSAGES, NO PROBLEMS."

WOR TV-RADIO

"ANN CORIO IS BACK IN TOWN WITH HER THIS WAS BURLESQUE AND FOR AN EVENING OF RAUCOUS HUMOR, IT JUST CAN'T BE BEAT."

The word Burlesque comes from the Italian word "Burlare." It means to make fun of, to joke to satirize.
In art, "caricature" is burlesque.
In music, "Parody" is burlesque.
In literature, "satire" is burlesque.

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It All Began With Aristophanes

"Aristophanes was a Greek poet who satirized people and their tragedies. This happened in Athens two thousand years ago, around the year 400 B.C. He may well be called 'the father of Burlesque.'"

Is burlesque bawdy? Yes. Is it lovable? Yes. Is it durable? Most decidedly yes. It's been with us one hundred years in this country, and its roots go all the way back to ancient Greece.

Few people know the real story of burlesque, and that's one reason I'm writing this book. They don't realize that burlesque for centuries has been a legitimate branch of show business. I'll admit it's the lowest branch, but that's the limb nearest the people. Its ancestral father was one of the greatest playwrights of all time. Aristophanes.

Aristophanes was the first to satirize people, human tragedies, and contemporary ideas and events. He laughed at the world in his plays, and he made people laugh, too. And that's what burlesque means. It comes from the Italian word "Burlare," which means "to laugh at, to make fun of."

Aristophanes freely used puns, gags and wise-cracks in his plays. What's more, he played up sensual descriptions and introduced the seduction theme into the theatre. The risqué elements that have always been a part of burlesque can also be credited to old Aristophanes.

Burlesque first appeared in the English language in a play entitled "The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbie," produced in London in 1600. It set the pattern for all the lusty satires and parodies to follow.

Of these, the most famous may be "The Beggar's



Opera," by John Gay, first produced at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre in 1727.

In 1750 it traveled to the New World. In those days in New York you had to shoot Indians aside to get into a theatre, but thousands of Americans did. It was presented at a theatre on Nassau Street as a "Play written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama."

One of the great, little-known talents in the history of the theatre is a playwright named John Brougham. All the time he was called the American Aristophanes.

He delighted in taking Shakespearian classics, as well as current dramas of the time, and burlesquing them. He was so successful that such actors as the great Edwin Booth would often journey downtown to recreate their legitimate roles in Brougham spoof.

On June 7, 1861, Adah Isaacs Menken, a girl with a beautiful figure, appeared in tights while strapped to a living horse in a play based on Byron's poem, "Mazeppa."

Scandal! Preachers piously fulminated against loose women in tights. But Adah had brought something new to burlesque, and it didn't take theatrical promoters long to grasp the idea. Soon there appeared the most notorious burlesque of its time, "The Black Crook," featuring "the Amazon Parade of legs."

"The Beggar's Opera," John Brougham, Adah Isaacs Menken, and "The Black Crook" were just prelude.

Burlesque in America at the time was just a small off-shoot of show business.

Lydia Thompson "The First Queen of Burlesque"—1869

Lydia Thompson, who came over from England, is the first girl whom everyone credits with the establishment of Burlesque as an American Institution. The year was 1869 and she would be the first English actress in history to bring to the United States an entire company of her own: beautiful flirtatious blondes who revealed all you could within the framework of tights. It opened in New York at Woods Theatre. In those days, men preferred their beauties on the voluptuous side. The first burlesque show was based on a classic "IXION, EX KING OF THESSALY" by F. C. Burand. Lydia played the ex king (don't ask me how she played a man's role and looked sexy) and the blondes burlesqued Juno, Venus, Neptune, The Three Graces and the Nine Muses. It was an immediate hit. The critics were confused. Here are some quotes. "It is impossible to give an idea of this sustained burlesque. One minute they are doing the can-can — the next singing a psalm—a bewilderment of limbs, Bella Donna and Grease Paint." And another "To present Jupiter as a jig dancer and Venus with a taste for the Can-Can is all done, we suppose, in a laudable spirit of Burlesque." (Sound familiar?)

Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes toured this country for ten years. In doing so she made Burlesque an American Institution. It wasn't until World War Two's Lend Lease program that we repaid this debt to the British. And even then, President Roosevelt didn't acknowledge it, if no one minds, I'll do it for him.



Lydia Thompson



The first pin-up was introduced by the first Queen of Burlesque, Lydia Thompson, who had reproductions of herself and her girls made on cigarette cards—available with all tobacco purchases.

The First Burlesque Queens



Pauline Markham



Mollie Williams



Adah Menken

The First of the Great Top Bananas

Lew Weber and Joe Fields appeared on the scene during the late 1800's in a burlesque show called "ADA Richmond's Burlesquers." They were the first "straight man-comedy team" and probably the most famous. They were the forerunners of Gallagher and Shean, Clark and McCulloch, Abbott and Costello, etc., etc. They set the pattern of attire still used by today's top bananas—the derby hats, baggy pants, wild "fright wigs" (they would be in style today with the hippie movement). And they were the first of the dialecticians. If an Irish act was wanted, they'd open their act singing, "Here we are an Irish Pair." If German "Here Ve are—a German Pair." They excelled in the art of slapstick. It was Weber and Fields who created the most quoted joke in American History:

"Who was that Lady I saw you with last night?"

"That was no Lady, that was my wife."



Weber and Fields



Great Stars from the Golden Cradle of Talent



W. C. Fields wasn't just a comic. He was a genius, he was funny, in a very special way.

He strolled into an elegant hotel one day, all alone, and asked the surprised desk clerk for the bridal suite. The clerk icily informed Fields that the bridal suite was reserved for gentlemen with brides.

"That's okay," intoned Fields. "I'll pick one up in town."



Al Jolson was fifteen when he began his singing career in a burlesque theatre. He stood in the aisle, while on stage two girls joined him in a trio.



Eddie Cantor started in a burlesque show called, "Apple of Paris" as a juggler's assistant. Eventually he started his own act as a singer.



Joe E. Brown in his autobiography wrote, "The public's low opinion of burlesque today has caused more than one prominent star to soft-pedal his (or her) humble beginnings in the field. I am much too grateful for the things I learned in burlesque to belittle its importance in my story. It was a fortunate thing for me that Frank Prevost decided burlesque would be a good place to try my comedy. It was a fortunate thing for me that he recognized comedy talents in me."



Leon Errol, who was to perform so unforgettably in the Ziegfeld Follies, not only appeared in burlesque, he staged his own shows.



Bert Lahr endeared himself to audiences in countless stage and film productions with a zany slapstick style born in his burlesque days.

Great Stars from the Golden Cradle of Talent (Cont.)



Clark and McCullough



Buster Keaton's gimmick was that he never smiled. He left burlesque to win movie fame.



Will Rogers appeared in burlesque oleo with his famous act of trick rope twirling. The "oleo" was the part of a burlesque show that presented vaudeville acts and usually the intermission between two acts.



Fanny Brice's first big job was in "Seamons Transatlantic Burlesque."

Ziegfeld on one of his talent searching trips heard her sing "Sadie Salome" in a Yiddish dialect and hired her on the spot. That same year she starred in the Ziegfeld Follies.



Sophie Tucker, in her autobiography, gives credit to her training in burlesque. She was a "black face belter" type of singer. Sophie arrived late one night at the famous old Howard Theatre and performed and didn't have time to put on the black cork makeup. She went on without it and was such a tremendous success she never resorted to it again.

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Origin of the Strip Tease

Shedding clothes is woman's oldest and most seductive act. In Biblical times, Salome danced and removed her veils so well, King Herod offered her anything she wanted just to dance for him. And that's how John the Baptist lost his head. However, to keep the record straight, Salome probably wasn't the first to shed her clothes. It was Eve with her fig leaf who started the whole thing. Lady Godiva did "her thing" astride a beautiful white stallion, clad only in her long blonde tresses. She did this in protest of taxes imposed by her husband, then the Lord Mayor of Coventry, England. Legend has it, her husband issued an order that all blinds be drawn in the town during this epic ride, and one man, whose name was Thomas, took a peek (the dirty old man) and hence was born the term "Peeping Tom." (See what you can learn, who else can tell you all these things?) Well, WHO DID perform the first Strip Tease? Leading contenders are Hinda Wassau and Carrie Finnell during the late twenties. It was Carrie who was known as the REMOTE Control Girl. She twirled tassels and her generous bosom was so well trained, she could make them do just about anything except sing April Showers in Swahili.



"Would you for a big red apple?"

**The Pretty
Strip Teasers**



Gypsy Rose Lee



Margie Hart



Carrie Finnell



Georgia Southern



Hinda Wausai



Zorita



Lily's Lock, Lily St., here decked out provocatively in lock and chain, is one of the modern striptease stars who came along in the 1950's, some years after the real heyday of burlesque.



Pepper Powell



Unblushing Rose, Rose LaRose, on stage was more than a bit risqué. One day a censor smuggled a camera into the theatre and that ended the Old Howard.

You've Got To Have A Gimmick



Lois DeFee liked publicity. She married a midget. The marriage only lasted a few days, but how long does it take to make a photograph? "How did the midget make love to Lois DeFee? Someone put him up to it."



Yvette Dare had an act in which trained parrots plucked her clothing off bit by bit.

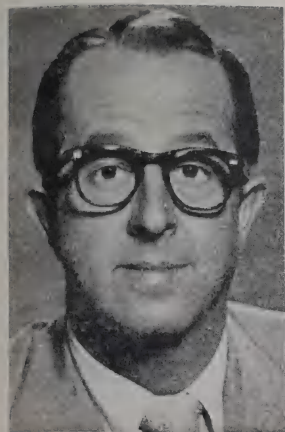


Rosita Royce appeared with white love doves that fluttered about her giving audiences only brief glimpses of Rosita's flesh.



Tassel-Twirler Sally Keith, a jaunty blonde performer is best remembered for her tassel-twirling.

Top Bananas



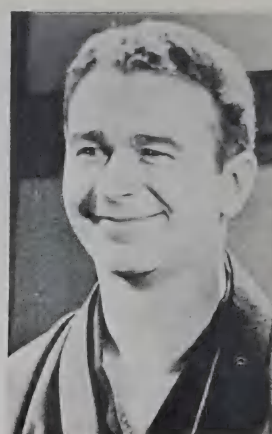
Phil Silvers



Red Skelton



Mike Sachs



Red Buttons



Bozo Snyder



Jackie Gleason



Rags Ragland



Bud Abbot & Lou Costello

Top Bananas of "This Was Burlesque"



Jerry Lester



Steve Mills



Charlie Robinson



Harry Conley



Ann Corio and Jerry Lester



Dick Bernie & The "Burley Cuties"

How Burlesque Came Back to New York

by Joe Di Mona

There exists in the New York area today at least eight million men who played hookey in their Senior Year at High School to see a burlesque show. Almost all of them went to see Ann Corio. And today almost all of them are playing hookey again—from the office—to see her in the smash hit nostalgic review, "This Was Burlesque."

The audience were there . . . the demand could have been anticipated . . . but it took a young man who had never seen a burlesque show in his life to bring the show to New York. Mike Iannucci, whose previous experience was one year as a Summer Stock producer and a few weeks as a football player for the Pittsburgh Steelers, was the unlikely candidate for a very special Show Business Hall of Fame. The man who, with Ann Corio, brought burlesque back to New York.

When he began it seemed impossible Mayor LaGuardia had banned burlesque in 1942. So there was the legal problem. On top of that, wise show people of all categories were categorically sure of one thing: Slapstick humor was dead, dead, dead. . . . baggy pants comedians in 1965, never.

Mike clung to his idea, despite everyone and everything. And for a very special reason. In his summer stock theater, Ann Corio had appeared in "Cat On A Hot Tin Roof" and the crowds broke all box-office records. Ann had always been the first to smile when people called her a great actress. Why the crowds then? Iannucci decided it was the lines they saw, and not the lines they heard, that brought the lines to the box office. And Ann Corio, one of Nature's most bountifully favored women, had the lines to attract the audiences.

And Ann had something else, too, something rare in burlesque queens . . . a gracious ladylike presence on stage which makes all her actions seem deliciously naughty, but somehow all right even to the women in the audience. If anyone could bring burlesque back to New York, Mike decided, it was Ann Corio.

Iannucci flew to Hollywood where Ann was living in her Malibu Beach house overlooking the banks of the Pacific—and the banks where her money (earned in her day as burlesque's reigning Queen) now was stored. It didn't take much persuading to get her on a plane bound for New York, but it *would* have if she had known what lay ahead—twelve months of labor, intrigue, disappointment, discouragements and ridicule—all from the Broadway veterans who told her burlesque was dead.

In desperation, Iannucci decided to try out the show as a nightclub package, and it opened at a club in Boston, near the scene of Ann's greatest moments in burlesque, the famous old Howard Theater. But, if Ann believed in ill omens, there was another crushing blow which happened by uncanny timing right while the show was on. One day Ann paid a visit to the Old Howard and was photographed and filmed for television newsreels depicting her return. The next day she was back again—but this time in tears as she watched the Old Howard burn to the ground. One more visible

evidence that burlesque belonged to a vanished past.

The show made no money in Boston. The critics were kind, but the smart boys from MCA, GAC, and William Morris shook their heads and wandered off. And now the show seemed completely hopeless.

But the idea was there . . . the audiences were waiting . . . and neither Corio nor Iannucci burned to the ground. Bouncing off their defeat at the nightclub, Ann took a small troupe of comedians and girls into a Boston burlesque house. She staged the famous "White Cargo" scene in which, while the drums thumped and the comic jumped, Ann bumped — in a sarong. Audiences stormed the theater and howled with laughter at the great burlesque sketches they had almost forgotten. And Ann Corio, close to the ashes of the Old Howard and the ashes of twelve months of effort, knew she and Mike had been right all along.

Back to New York with renewed determination, the final persuasion of some reluctant investors, together with the money of people who worked on the show, and on March 6, 1962 burlesque came back to New York. And what a homecoming!

Reviews thundered through all of the newspapers. A smash! Delightful! Hilarious Joyful! Magazines joined in the praise. *The New Yorker* devoted its entire theatrical page to the brash new show. *Variety* still could not quite believe it. The headline on their review "(Great show) — May Catch On."

"This Was Burlesque" caught on. In April noted Broadway showman Billy Rose paid the show a visit, and then spoke to Ann and Mike. He enthused about the show, but worried about the traditional audience fall-off during the hot summer months — especially in its out-of-the-way off-Broadway location.

But by then "This Was Burlesque" was the most talked-about phenomenon in a decade of New York theatrical history, and in August, when Billy had forecast possible doom, two strange things happened. In the hottest month of the year, "This Was Burlesque" was the hottest show in New York, breaking all its previous box-office records. And Ann Corio, despite the heat, went out and bought a new mink coat. At that time, we knew we were in New York to stay.



The Influence of Ann Corio's "This Was Burlesque" on TV "Everybody's Doing It"

"Heah Come de Judge, Heah Come de Judge, Heah come de Judge!" It's Sammy Davis, Jr. on network television chanting the phrase over and over again until it becomes a national password. Everybody's saying it. What does the phrase mean? It's merely the opening statement in one of the most famous burlesque scenes—"The Courtroom."

Red Skelton, every Christmas, does a scene "Trying to get Arrested." It's a burlesque scene. Jackie Gleason has made his biggest hit with "The Honey-mooners." He's done literally hundreds of shows—and they're all based on a burlesque skit, "Friendly Neighbors."

I could go on and on, but by now I think you get the idea. Burlesque comedy is a beloved form of entertainment that has woven its way into American life. They allowed an ex-burlesque comic named Danny Thomas to put on a burlesque show. It was called "The Wonderful World of Burlesque." On Broadway we had shows such as "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "Top Banana," "Star and Garter" and many others that incorporated burlesque comedy, directly or indirectly. In fact, it's hard not to incorporate it because burlesque comedy appeals to the belly-laughers, and believe it or not, people love a belly laugh. How subtle was Charlie Chaplin when his cane tripped up a waiter with a full tray? Yet who would not agree that Charlie is the most popular comic who ever lived. His Music Hall routines, the British equivalent of burlesque comedy, made him the lovable tramp. And every burlesque comic in baggy pants was a part of that tradition.

As for revealing the human anatomy, I don't know whether burlesque can take all the credit for that. After all, as I've pointed out elsewhere, girls have been revealing their beautiful bodies for a long, long time. But girls today are wearing miniskirts on the streets and see-through blouses to parties. Strangely enough, I think they're going too far—but who am I to talk? The difference is I got paid, and my tongue-in-cheek answer to reporters who ask me to drop a shoulder strap for a free press photo is always, "Not at these prices."

Yes, burlesque, that grand old show business now beginning its second century in America, is everywhere—on television, movies, the stage, and nightclubs. Its comedy is as much a part of America as apple pie. And its cheesecake is not a modern American tradition, too.

Will burlesque die again? Never, for it has never truly died. It is living today, everywhere, as it always has, in the hearts of people who want to laugh.



Frank Sinatra and Danny Thomas



Danny Thomas and Carroll Channing



Phil Silvers and Cyd Charisse



Jim Nabors, Lee Remick, Mickey Rooney and Danny Thomas

The All-Time Classic Comedy Scene

No Courtroom scene, as such, exists; but out of the courtroom situation dozens and dozens of versions have evolved. Burlesque comics speak of the Courtroom scene as "Hagan's version," "Smith's version," "Costello's version," etc. And now Sammy Davis has made Pigmeat Markham's version famous—and every teenager in America is shouting, "Heah cum de Judge."

The hero of the Courtroom is a demented Judge, who has an eye for the ladies. In fact, this eye sometimes wanders to ankle-level, as the respected Judge opens a little door at the bottom of his desk and peeks out at the pretty witness.

The Judge is armed with a weapon that you can't find anymore: the bladder. In the old days burlesque comics would go to the neighborhood slaughterhouse and buy a pig's bladder. This would then be dried and inflated. The bladder was needed because the running motif of the Courtroom was the Judge flailing away at the heads of the prosecuting attorney, the defense counsel, and the crazy cop in attendance. What the bladder did was made a terrific crack, without hurting anyone.

When "This Was Burlesque" opened we scurried around to get such a bladder and found that in modern-day slaughterhouse operations, these bladders are no longer available. Maybe they grind them up for children's cereal, or turn them into penicillin, or whatever. But they're not available for conking a defense counsel. Anything else you use, a balloon, a rolled-up newspaper, just doesn't give that satisfying crack.

It's probably from the Courtroom that the famous "Pay the Two Dollars" gag came from, although burlesque might have stolen it from vaudeville. This is the situation where the victim has a \$2 parking ticket—and an ambitious defense attorney. The Judge orders him to pay the \$2 and the defense counsel is furious. He screams at the Judge and the Judge gets angry . . . meanwhile the nervous victim is muttering to his attorney: "Pay the two dollars."

Too late, the Judge rules them in contempt of court and the victim must serve ninety days in jail or pay a \$200 fine. But the defense attorney is not done yet. "I'll appeal!" And he goes to higher and higher courts, each time the sentence getting heavier and heavier, with the victim pleading into the crazy attorney's ear: "Pay the two dollars!" It usually ends with a life sentence!

The basic version we use is one called, "It's a Wise Child." Before we got to our main scene we threw in a number of other cases which were in

effect blackouts. For example, an Indian comes into court, claiming his wife has committed adultery. In fact, her child is not an Indian. The Indian dramatically sums up his appeal:

"When Indian plant corn.

Indian get corn.

When Indian plant wheat,

Indian get wheat.

But when Indian plant child,

Indian get Chinaman???"

After a few blackouts like this, and various fol-de-rol such as the Judge instructing the Cop to bring in the next case, and the Cop staggering in with a case of whiskey, we move to "It's a Wise Child."

A very pretty blonde comes in and takes the witness stand. Chaos breaks loose as she arranges her skirt about her knees, and the attorneys, the Cop, and the Judge break their backs to get a good peek. This is another case of paternity; the question being—who is the father of the lady's child? All sorts of accusations are made—suspicion even moves to the Prosecuting Attorney who admits he took the lady for a drive in a park.

"What happened?" asks the lecherous Judge.

"We made love on the back seat!"

The court is at complete attention. The Judge says, "You made love on the back seat?"

"That's right. We made love on the back seat. And when we finished, the car was gone. We had to leave the seat in the woods."

(This gag was shamelessly stolen from Peter Arno's celebrated cartoon in the New Yorker—but in burlesque we were always very generous in drawing from all sources.)

Now it looks as if the Prosecuting Attorney is guilty, but the Judge renders a Solomon-like decision: "It's a wise child that knows its own father," he says. "Let's ask the child."

The Policeman then brings in the child—and what a child! She's a seventeen-year-old beauty with a forty-inch bust. A knockout.

"This is the child?" asks the Judge. He eyes her bosom and makes his first judicial pronouncement: "Look at those balloons!"

Now the suspense mounts as the Judge asks the child to tell the court who her father is, relying on her intuition. The Prosecuting Attorney? The girl nods "No." The Defense Counsel? No. The addled Cop? No.

"Then who is your father?" explodes the Judge.

"YOU!" she points to the Judge, and the Judge faints!

The Courtroom



Fireman, save my wife!



The Safe



The Candy Butchers

This phrase had its origin from Push Cart, the hawkers who sold their ware from carts on the lower East Side. It finally evolved to the slang word "Putscher" (or pusher) and finally to Butcher. The Candy "Butcher" in a burlesque show would appear before the curtain and his spiel would be something like this:

"Good Evening Ladees and Gentulmun, tell ya what I'm gonna do tonight. Tonite we are gonna give away approxa mutly a quarter of a million dollars in cash prizes. And as that piece of resistance, we will give away exactly ten solid gold fourteen carat Gruen watches. If you are lucky enough to get one of these watches—believe me, it will be the best Gruen you ever had in your life. Everyone in this theatre will receive a beautiful practical

gift. For the ladies we have eight piece Parisien manicure sets, direct from gay Paree, and many other valuable gifts that time will not permit me to mention. Now we can't take these gifts and throw them in the air, as the people down front would receive most of these gifts and you gents in the back would run down the aisles and possibly get injured. The firm I represent, The California Candy Company, is offering these gifts, at no additional price, to each and everyone of you who purchase a box of the California Chocolate Dainties. Each and every box contains a souvenir to please every true burlesque fan. Only twenty five cents a box for the California Chocolate Dainties and each and every box contains a gift. Before I conclude the sale, I would like to say that if you receive only a box of California Chocolate Dainties, believe me, your money and time will be well spent. Thank you."

The "Pasties"

"Pasties" are circular sequined patches about the size of a quarter, except in Boston, where the censor insists on the half dollar size (don't ask me who measures them). They are a minimal concession to modesty.

The "G" String

Well it certainly isn't for tying packages or flying kites. A "G" string is the patch of respectability between the stripper and the audience. Its origin is rumored to have begun when British missionaries, arriving in a remote British Colony in Africa, were too sensitive to the sight of "naked natives" and therefore they devised a "girdle cloth," which was abbreviated (no pun intended) to "G" string.



Ann Corio Queen of Burlesque

Ann Corio has been described as the most famous as well as the most beautiful of all stripteasers.

She was called the Queen of Burlesque, but she never had a gimmick, never used a prop, never did a bump or grind or wriggle. She was—and still is—simply one of the most beautiful girls ever to stand up in front of any kind of audience. And in the heyday of burlesque she was one of the best at her art of striptease. She endured in burlesque longer than any other star.

With her New York show, *This Was Burlesque*, Ann Corio brought about today's great revival. The show ran for thousands of performances in New York, and is still playing to capacity houses all over the country. It has won uncountable numbers of new fans—both men and women—for burlesque.

A study of the newspaper clips on Ann Corio makes it difficult to decide whether she is better to look at or listen to.

The *Journal-American* describes her as: "Standing 5'6", weighing 125 pounds, curves in the right places, luxuriant hair and that 'Certain Something' which turned a chorus girl into a national institution."

Another newspaper said about the girl who was christened Anna Maria Corio:

"Her eyes twinkle when she tells a funny experience. Her voice is soft and yet vibrant and her laugh is the kind that makes you want to join in. There is nothing upstage about Ann Corio."

A Boston review described:

"The real Ann Corio whose shrewd brain created the much publicized person who shares her name the body. The Anna Maria Corio is now fighting for the salvation of the artistic soul of Ann Corio, most famous as well as the most beautiful of all stripteasers."

Miss Corio has the Harvard students to thank for a good part of her fame. There was a saying among the Harvard men that: "You can't graduate until you have seen Ann Corio." Many of the Harvard men, who are still her fans, now hold high positions in Washington.

The start of the Ann Corio Legend was in Hartford, Connecticut.

Her first professional appearance was winning a dance contest in a local theatre at the age of 15. With the first prize came an offer of a job in the chorus of a show.

It was only a matter of time after her first appearances that she was on the front page of the newspapers hailed as "The girl with the epic epidemis, the favorite stripper of, most of the college students and also the diplomatic corps."

As a result of her being called one of the most beautiful women on the stage, she was asked to play summer theatres in 1940 and she went "legit" when she appeared in "White Cargo" and "The Barker"



in several summer theatres.

Her impish mood never disappeared, she insisted on a program note which said:

"Any similarity between Miss Corio's acting and that of Katherine Cornell is strictly accidental!"

On her first night in "White Cargo," in her territory, Cambridge, Massachusetts, she made show-business history. She made her first appearance just before the ending of the first act, clad briefly in brown powder, and she said: "I am Tondeleyo."

The curtain fell and a Harvard student jumped up and shouted "Wow! What an actress!"

Miss Corio made a number of pictures in Hollywood where she became known as "Queen of the Quickies," because of the 6 day shooting schedule on her movies for which she received \$10,000 a week plus 20% of the profits.

Her remarks to the press about her movies: "My pictures weren't released — they escaped." "They don't want them good—they want them Tuesday!" "Most of my pictures were Jungle films—it got so I couldn't pass a tree without an urge to climb it!"

An astute business woman, she has wisely invested her earnings in annuities, blue chip stocks and real estate. She is also a presiding officer of 3 big business corporations.



ANN CORIO visits the old Howard Theatre the day after it was gutted by fire. A peculiarity of the fire is the poster shown in this photo — although many other posters — which were pasted OVER the above one — burned off, the fire stopped when it reached the Corio poster.

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Robert Goulet congratulates Ann at the 6th Anniversary party of **THIS WAS BURLESQUE** Backstage in Las Vegas.



Phil Silvers introduces and greets Ann Corio on stage at grand opening of "This Was Burlesque" at Hollywood's Huntington Hartford Theatre.



Lauritz Melchior celebrates his 80th birthday backstage at "This Was Burlesque" in champagne toast with Ann Corio.



Red Skelton clowning it up with Ann.



Backstage at **THIS WAS BURLESQUE** always looks like a celebrity gathering. Friends June Havoc and James Mason tell Ann how much they enjoyed her.



Movie producer Ross Hunter congratulates Ann at Hollywood opening of **THIS WAS BURLESQUE**.



At a reception at Gracie Mason, New York's then Mayor Bob Wagner greets Ann Corio and another guest, the T.V., movie and stage actor, Paul Ford.